RAJYA SABHA

Tuesday, the 5th August, 2003/14 Sravana, 1925 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock,

MR. CHAIRMAN in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Recovery of dues from PIA

*221. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of CIVIL VIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) owes a few crores Indian Airlines since 1999; and

(b) if so, what action has been taken to recover the dues?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (HRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY): (a) Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) d Indian Airlines had bilateral arrangements for providing ground ıdling, security and other services to each other's flight at airports in ır respective countries. The pending cases of disputes in respect of ·dling, security, loaning of aircraft spares etc. (about Rs. 40 lacs) are ject to reconciliation.

(b) Cases are reviewed/sorted out by mutual discussions between concerned officials of the two airlines.

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Sir, the hon. Minister, in his reply, stated that the pending cases of disputes in respect of handling, urity, loaning of aircraft spares, etc., which are about Rs. 40 lakhs subject to reconciliation.

The quantum of arrears is not material. But, I would like to know from hon. Minister whether it is true that India is contemplating to ł technical-level talks with Pakistan on 27th and 28th August, 2003, restoration of air links between these two countries. Will the hon. ister ensure that the political developments do not harm the

commercial interests of the nation? This is a simple question. The hon. Minster may reply to this.

SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDI: Sir, it is a fact that the DGCA of Pakistan had approached the DGCA of India for technical-level talks which are scheduled for 27th and 28th August, 2003 and the alternative dates, as has been suggested for these talks, are 3rd and 4th September, 2003.

Sir, as far as the commercial interests are concerned, the agenda has been proposed by Pakistan, which deals with restoration of point-to-point service between the two countries and also rationalisation of aeronautical charges as well as additional points of call, including resumption of over-flights. However, when the discussion takes place, on the schedled dates, these modalities could be discussed.

श्री संजय निरुपम: सभापति जी, मुझे भी मूलत: यही प्रश्न पूछना था कि प्रधानमंत्री जी ने एक बार फिर पाकिस्तान के साथ शांति प्रक्रिया शुरू की है और बातचीत का एक माहौल बन रहा है। संसद पर हमले के बाद पाकिस्तान के साथ जो हमारे हवाई संबंध थे, उनको हमने तोड़ दिया था। अब पाकिस्तान की तरफ से पहले प्रस्ताव आया है कि एक बार फिर से वे संबंध स्थापित होने चाहिएं, बाईलेटूरल फिर से रिवाइव होने चाहिए। क्या मंत्री महोदय, कैटेगोरिकली बता सकते हैं कि पाकिस्तान को फ्लाई करने की अनुमति कब दी जा रही है? दूसरे पाकिस्तान जाने के लिए हमारी फ्लाइट कब शुरू होने वाली है?

SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDI: Sir, at this point, it would be too early to commit the exact date of restoration. With regard to the point made by the hon. Member, I would say that Pakistan had put forward the proposal for resumption of flights. The fact here, is India has lifted the restrictions from 10th June, 2003, permitting over flights across the flying zone of India. It was the initiative of the hon. Prime Minister to restore it. In response to that, the DGCA of Pakistan communicated to the DGCA of India its desire for resumption of technical-level talks which are scheduled for next month.

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH: Sir, I just want to follow-up my frined. Mr. Sanjay Niruppam's question. Now, since, an initiative has been taken at the highest level by the hon. Prime Minister, we welcome it for having good neighbourly relations with Pakistan. But, why is this delay? And, have you realised the inconvenience caused to passengers because to go to Pakistan from India they will first have to go to Dubai and from

Dubai they have to go to Pakistan. And similarly, if a Pakistani wishes to come to India, he also has to come by the same route. So, can ou give us some indication about the timeframe with which the flights would be resumed; and would also like to know from the hon. Minister the reasons for this delay?

SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDI: Sir, if you recall, the hon. Prime Minister had announced it in Parliament on 2nd May, 2003, that he had a telephonic disucussion with the Prime Minister of Pakistan on 28th April, 2003, where the restoration of air links was considered. In pursuance, and as a follow-up of that decision, a proposal has come from the Government of Pakistan, through its DGCA, for technical-level talks, the schedule of which I had mentioned just now. You will appreciate that it is a diplomatic process and looking at the relations that we have with Pakistan, it needs a thorough consideration of every step that we take, even restoration of air links. We are aware of the situaton and the inconvenience caused to the passengers. But the initivative of the hon. Prime Minister needs to be appreciated in this regard. And, in pursuance to his initiative, these steps are being taken.

Assistance to fiscal deficit States

*222. SHRI SURENDRA LATH: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have a proposal to rescue the revenue deficit States from financial crisis;

(b) the State-wise financial condition at the moment; and

(c) the steps taken to assist the revenue deficit States for improving their financial condtion?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) to (c) A Statement is placed on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) to (c) Yes, Sir. The Government has initiated several measures in this regard. Apart from the release of non-plan revenue deficit grant as recommended by the Eleventh Finance Commision, Government of India also extends need-based assistance to States, so as to take care of temporary mismatch in their receipt and expenditures.